

THE WEAVER WHO CLAD THE SUMMER¹

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I HAD always felt vaguely that there must be at times an intense pathos which overcame the master-worker in perishable materials — the actor in his supreme moment; the singer, the musician — I thought — must feel a bitter regret that his glory cannot live but must die, *in articulo gloriæ*, with the sound, the effect he has created. Bernhardt seemed to me to have that in the back of her mind when she exulted over her appearance in the moving pictures. "I am immortal," she cried, dramatically — always dramatic, that old lady — "I am a film." So thin a bridge to immortality!

The actor, the singer, the musician; struggling through years and over obstacles to attain perfection — and then what? A brief triumph in a perishable art; a transient, fugitive gracing of a day, an hour, a moment . . . and then another forgotten mortal artist. I remembered Gautier's decision, "The coin outlasts Tiberius." Paint, chisel, then, or write if you wish your work to endure.

No doubt here was wisdom in a little box; and I fell to wondering stupidly what there could possibly be in being a worker at the other, the evanescent thing. I remembered a certain kind of moth that dies soon after it is born. Are these people moths?

And then one night a ragtag ghost came and answered me.

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I

It was eleven o'clock. Outside it was snowing, and so I remained in Pigalle's, loath to leave, and killing the time with a book. Pigalle's was one of those basement eating places in New York's West Thirties, a comfy, tight, cosy sort of a cellar. An Italian table d'hôte, of course, though not like the usual; it had more character and less popularity. You seldom saw a blond skin there, the place being unknown to the night-tramping hordes of avid New Yorkers who crowd into all the "foreign" places and devour all the foreign food they can find. Mostly the *habitués* were French and Italian, gentle, noisy people who did, in their way, slight damage to the fine arts. By nine-thirty, they were done eating and gone; almost all the lights were turned out and chairs were piled up on the tables, out of the way of the early morning mop. By ten Pigalle and his wife and several others, mostly sculptors, scene painters and musicians, were gathered beneath the light at the main table and had begun their nightly game of poker. From then on it was slim gambling and loud, staccato chatter in French and Italian.

At eleven, then, this night, the cautious door-bell tinkled. Some kind of a world knocking at mine and wanting to get in, I thought. Some kind of an adventure out there, demanding to be encountered; some kind of a soul pounding at the walls of my soul. Every time the doorbell tinkles, whoever has this Show is setting a new scene. Or, no. The wall opens and the genie slips through, spreads his rug on the ground and begins to make new magic before your very eyes. Never a doorbell rang yet, I thought, that didn't bring a bit of heaven or hell—or mere purgatory—with it.

At eleven the doorbell tinkled and the fat little waitress-maid-scrubwoman-second cook, a Lombard wench by the name, the sweet ineffable name of Philomène, waddled over and opened the door a tiny space. Pigalle

occasionally sold liquor without a license; hence his caution as to visitors. She let in an odd apparition; with doubts, I thought; certainly with mutterings and rolling of her black eyes. At any rate she knew him, whether for well or ill.

The man cast his eyes around, saw that the only open table save the poker table was the one I held, and came and sat down opposite me. With a slightly insolent motion he dragged his chair around sidewise, turned his shoulder to me and stared across the room at a gaudy lithograph of the good ship *Isabella* bound for Naples, eighty-five dollars first class. Philomène, with a porky look, asked him what he wished.

He announced in French that he desired of all things to "strangle a parroquet." This was some absurd slang for saying he wanted an absinthe.

He was gaunt, tall, round-shouldered, queer old fellow with a gray beard and a matted moustache, colored with the brown stain of cigarette smoke. As ugly, I thought, as ugly as — oh, Socrates. And yet with something lovable about him. And his combination of dress was certainly odd enough: a frayed, cutaway coat with extremely long tails, dripping wet and dangling cylindrically like sections of melted stovepipe; mussy, baggy old gray trousers; a blue plush waistcoat; a black, but clean muffler pinned tight up under his chin with a safety pin of the brassiest; and a broad-brimmed black slouch hat, so broad of brim that he walked forever in its shadow. This hat he kept on all the time. His hands were long and clean and white — the virile, sensitive hands of a poet, I thought. The eyes were the fascinating feature of the man. I said to myself right away, "This man is a mystic." Though they burned brightly in their sockets, they had a trick of turning abruptly dim; a sort of film or veil, closed over them. "Druid or old Celt," I murmured. "Give him a bit of mistletoe and he'd call his gods right down into my *demi-tasse* and scare the poker game into fits."

He swallowed his whole glass of absinthe in five gulps — a performance that it would make a cow shudder to watch — threw back his head, and, with a hoarse burr, called for another. This time he spoke English; but the burr was decidedly Scotch. Pigalle now looked around at him — gross, pleasant, Provençal Pigalle — and nodded; then went on placidly shuffling the tiny cards in his great fat hands.

When the second absinthe came the old man took it slowly; settled himself back on his shoulder-blades and the tail of his spine, and pulled his hat down level with his eyes, as if he intended to spend a considerable time with us. He called for a package of French cigarettes — *cigarettes jaunes* — and proceeded to color his moustache a ripper brown. "Now my adventure has knocked and come in," I thought. "If he is my adventure, I cannot help him — nor can I keep him off. He is the *primum mobile*. It is up to him."

Suddenly my ears were shocked with a sharp argument between two young fellows at the poker table. No, it was not about the game. One said something; the other shrieked his answer; the first shouted back; the second in a violent burst that had a finality about it slammed down his cards and said something curt, with a solemn rolling of his eyes.

To my amazement, the odd old fish across from me boomed out with equal violence: "*Ben trovato!*" None of them paid any attention to him.

I may have shown some of my surprise at his action, for he turned suddenly to me, and asked: "Did you understand what he said?"

I replied that I did not.

"He said, roughly translated: 'Sufficient unto eternity is the glory of the hour.' Yes. And it is true. Sufficient unto eternity is the glory of the hour, young man. There's many an artist who must —" he stopped short and began biting his finger ends.

My mind reverted to Bernhardt's film and the ques-

tion about the moth. "Who must — what?" I prodded. "Content himself with this catch phrase?"

"Content himself? Damnation, no! Must feel the keener triumph in a piece of work, young man, just because it is perishable." He thumped the table and breathed hard. I got the full paregoric reek of his drink. "What is this stork-legged Verlaine going to say?" I thought to myself. But he contented himself with breathing for a few moments and that odd film dropped over his eyes. "Just because the thing is ended, and dies out of men's minds almost as soon as it is ended" — he seemed to be feeling slowly for the words — "if the work was right, was masterly done, there's a sort of higher joy in knowing that it triumphed — and was suddenly gone — like a sunset, like a light on the water, like a summer." He asked abruptly: "You think I have 'spiders on my ceiling' — you think I am crazy?"

"On the contrary. Can you make this clearer to me, this — ?"

"My agreement that sufficient unto eternity is the glory of the hour?" He sipped his absinthe. "With your patience. Let me see. I can give you a favorite example of mine, about a friend of mine named Andy Gordon — something like a story?" Now in his eyes there was an eager shine.

"Go on."

"You know, my friend, I am Highland Scotch." (He pronounced it Heeland.) "I may be queer. That all depends. But don't be alarmed at the way I put things. I am not out of my head. Now this yarn about Andy Gordon. Remember," said he, tapping the table with his long white finger, and smiling at me in a charming manner, "sufficient unto eternity is the glory of the hour. By the way, that young fellow over there who said that is a violoncellist. 'Grand ducal 'cello to the imperial violin,' you know."

I reconsidered him in the wink of an eye. He is not Socrates and he is not Verlaine, I said to myself.

This old lovable scarecrow is the Ancient Mariner, and he is going to hold me with his glittering eye and I am going to listen like a three years' child. The very fellow: the "skinny hand," the "long gray beard" — and doubtless, too, the true Ancient Mariner smelled of tobacco and drink. Certainly he talked poetry. And so did my old man, miraculously, almost without effort. So I sat back and listened, while he told his story.

II

Andy Gordon was for all his years a weaver in the mills at Glastonbury; just an ordinary human stick or stone, as you might call it, doing his mechanical work at the machine like a machine — until one day he drew his pay, before you could say Jack Robinson, and started off walking anywhere. He did it of a sudden and without seeming cause, but inwardly there was a pressing retraction upon his soul that told him to get away from the mechanical actualities.

He was feeling himself tired to death that day he drew his money; and, of course, he was still young. And when a young man really wants very much to die, he always comes out of that valley (at any rate, so people say) with something new in his heart. Andy walked off anywhere, just so he got to the hills.

And when he arrived at the hills, it was all very, very sweet. They were just coming light yellow and the bluebirds were there before him, touring the air just for the fun of it. And he made right away a queer discovery — he knew for the first time that New Year's is not the first day of January, at all. It's the first day of spring. Men are right silly, Andy thought, calling some dead and sodden day in mid-winter by the fancy, saucy name of New. The thing that is New, of course, is the Green. The New Year is the Green Year.

Well, he had a hunk of bread in his pocket and some

onions, and a man can walk a long way upon the strength of that; so he went along up a road when he felt like it and over a hill when he felt like that. But most of the time his heart was very sad in his body and his mind took no pleasure of the bluebirds. For he was thinking that his life was n't very much. He could see nothing in working year after year at the mill. And yet that was all he was good for (so he thought).

On and on and on walked Andy. There were parts of those hills where he walked that probably nobody, not even the Indian, ever traversed. Anything could happen there—where the woods are dark with pine or sunny with birch, and where echoes are the only memory (and they never last long). It was so far away, up in through there; as I've said, anything could happen there and we would never hear of it. All day long the cold brooks run down, brown from the juices of the hemlock bark, over browned stones—but of course they never talk and tell anything.

About noon, Andy found himself upon an old disused and overgrown road, that for years had been traveled only by rabbits and skunks and woodchucks and deer. And in a clearing at one side he saw an old log cabin which had not been lived in for years and years. There was a bit of brook at the back and an old wind-break of pine trees.

"Now I will eat a snack here," Andy said to himself, "and afterward, may God have mercy on my soul, I will lie down and nap under the pine and try to sleep off whatever it is that is bothering me."

And he did so, lying down beneath the pine—

He closed one eye gently and slowly (like letting a lid down on a box of playthings) and then he closed the other eye the same way; and then he knew nothing at all until suddenly a Voice came clap out of the blue sky, calling his name, "Andy Gordon, man! Andy Gordon!" over the hills and far.

Andy was amazed, of course, and said: "Here I am,"

with all his might, but without making a bit of sound (just as we all do in dreams).

"The thing the matter with you," went on the great Voice, without any introduction or anything of the sort, but coming from everywhere and nowhere at once, "is that you need Work. You are tired to death with work; work-with-a-little-*'w'* is killing the soul out of you, Andy; work-with-a-little-*'w'* always does that to men, if you give it the whole chance. But that can't be helped. You're bound to have a whole lot of it in your life. But — *if* you don't mix some Big-*'W'* Work in with it, then indeed and indeed your life will be disastrous and your days will be dead."

Andy did not know but what he was a-dreaming, though his eyes were now wide open and he could see a robin hopping on the sod. "What is it you mean by Big-*'W'* Work?" he asked.

"Of course, that's the Work you love for the Work's sake. It's Work you do because you love the thing itself you're working for."

"You make that hard to understand," said Andy.

"Well, and it will be hard for people to understand *you* when you're at that sort of Work. They know well enough what you're about as long as you turn 'em out yards of flannel down at Glastonbury, don't they?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Andy.

"And it would be the same way if you were a smith and turned 'em out horse shoes, or a bill clerk and turned 'em out bills. They'd understand *that*."

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Andy.

"But the trouble with that work-with-a-little-*'w'* is that you do it only for the pay there is in it — never for the love of it — that's why it seems to you a shame to waste your whole life at it, you know."

"Indeed it does, and that's why I'm here away from it all," said Andy.

"All very well for a while," said the Voice. "But you'll have to keep on at it somewhat — say, half your

life at work-with-a-little-‘w,’ sitting at your machine down yonder at the mill, turning ‘em out the stuff they know to be useful.”

At that Andy fell silent and was sad again. Where would he find a beginning at the Big-“W” Work? he asked himself.

But the Voice seemed to know what was in his mind, and answered him: “I can give you that sort of Work. But it will take the best there is in you to do that sort of Work; and the Work will surely die as soon as you’ve accomplished it. And there will be no money in it for you, at all, and a great deal of pain, care and weariness. But you will find great love in your Work, and for your Work; and though it all vanishes at once you will experience so wonderful a joy that it will seem as if, night and day, God is whispering the secrets of life in your ear.”

“What is the Work like?” asked Andy.

“Would you be willing to try it? Remember, it is difficult and wearying and is dead as soon as it is born.”

“Yes, by glory, I would,” shouted Andy.

“*Then dress this maid until you die!*” commanded the Voice.

At the words, my friend, there was music of a million armies of all sorts of birds, whistling and whirring over the green earth; and the echoes of their tremendous singing shook all the trillions of tiny new leaves and made the waves of air to dance—how shall I say?—like the waves of a sea of music running out forever.

And there, on the grass, sure enough, was a little naked baby girl just able to stand.

Very quiet, she was, and she looked up at Andy with eyes of a fairy blue—as if they’d been colored by that very same fairy that goes about with a brush coloring all the violets we ever see. (The ones we never see, you know, are never colored.)

“We-e-ell!” cried Andy, puckering up his lips and squinting up his eye-lids. “And who are you?”

"I'm early Summer," she lisped. "And I'm in a dreadful hurry. I'd like some lemon-colored silk — for a mantle, you know? — And some apple-green tassels for my hair. And please do be quick about it. I'm due, you see. So I'll be ever so much obliged if you'll only hurry."

Andy whistled ruefully. "Now, *that* would take some weaving, miss." He hesitated. "I don't think I'm that skillful."

The little goddess looked hurriedly away over her shoulder as if she were about to depart.

"And then," Andy continued, "I have no loom up here; and no warp; and no filling. Nothing at all to work with, you see. I —"

But while he was stumbling about with his excuses, he saw the little one actually fading away before his eyes; and a pain most bitter caught at his heart, as if he were losing all his life. So he cried out:

"But I'll *try* miss. Give me a little time, miss. Oh, please, my wee bairn. I have an old handloom of my grandfather's; and I can go and hurry and fetch all the stuff up here somehow and I'll work as fast as I can. Indeed, I'll try my best."

Whereat, you see, the babe came back to him, smiling as sweetly as early Summer ever smiled. "There really isn't such an awful hurry," she said. "We can always have Weather, you know, and hold these things back a bit."

That was the beginning of it.

Andy was about twenty-eight years old then, and he really had an awful time of it at first trying to work out by hand the wonderful stuffs and colors. There was the fern-design, spangled with Sweet William, for instance. It was only to be the edging on a shawl for her, but he spent three days and two nights on it; and then she asked him to make it over with jack-in-the-pulpit inset, because she was sure to grow tired very soon of Sweet William; then she changed her mind about jack-

in-the-pulpit and decided on wintergreen berries. This is just a sample of one teeny bit of what she demanded. And Andy was very awkward; so naturally he began complaining of his shuttles being too clumsy for such fine work and the cobwebby filling getting tangled up in his thumbs and after a bit of chewing his nails in despair he swore the thing never could be done by hand.

No sooner had he got that out, than he heard the Voice roar loud like an emperor's voice and say:

"The Big- 'W' Work you love to do *must* be done by hand. It *can't* be done any other way. That is why you were given thumbs, when the other beasts got none."

So Andy found it was no use quarreling with the tools. He looked at his hands, holding them up before him, and he thought: "Well, the Voice is right. My hands would n't be any good without my thumbs. I have hands and thumbs both and surely they were given me for the reason the Voice mentions. At any rate, I know no better."

That made Andy set to work all the harder, for the idea of Thumb-and-Craft was new to him; and that made his craft very interesting to him, so that he became determined to stick to it until he got the beauty out of it. (All the same, it was a frightfully backward Summer that year; and nobody — except Andy — thought very well of her.)

He found indeed that he would have to work as fast as his fingers could go. For the little Summer grew big and bigger in an amazingly short time; and she kept throwing things away as fast as she put them on just as the Voice had foretold.

Her days, though, went happily along, all full of sweet smells out of cups and umbels of flowers and from the liquor of the leaves as they steeped in the hot sun; and Andy himself felt quite happy (when he was n't terribly interested in his Work, and then he paid attention to nothing at all save what was between his thumb and forefinger). But while he worked and the Summer

danced or dozed and grew before him, he noticed something he had never noticed until then — As the Summer grew older, she kept asking him for darker blues. While she was little she had liked light greens, but week by week as time went on she insisted more and more that he put in plenty of blue.

"Bluer and bluer," muttered Andy, and a wee shot of pain hit his heart. "Yes, it's bluer and bluer, all right, I know. And finally some day 't will all be steel-blue everywhere — in the snow-drifts and in the skies — and neither the lass nor I will be here then."

Well may you believe that the departing of that first Summer was a sad matter to him. He had done his best, you see, and a whole new world of trying had been thrown open to him. And really he was beginning to get the knack of that kind of weaving. And she was a fine big apple-cheeked woman now, and —

"Well, if I do say it myself," growled Andy, "she looks very handsome in those dresses; and for the first time in my life I take a Pride in my Work."

But in spite of all that the Voice came, you must know, and told him this little dream-girl must die, and there would be another, a different little girl next year; and all the weaving must be gone through with again.

"Shall I be weaving this lass her shroud?" asked Andy of the Voice.

But the Voice did not answer him.

When Andy told all this to *her*, his first Summer cried for a whole week in amongst the trees and over the pastures and meadows —

And then one morning, she was no longer there.

Andy sat in the doorway of the cabin and stared across the hills. He saw pine trees, ever green, and he made up his mind she had not died but had gone into one of them so as to live forever. And then he fell to thinking how there were so many millions of pine trees, and he guessed to himself how each of the millions of Summers we have had must have gone into one of those trees so as never

to die but to be always of the Green Folk, ever green. Well, he rocked back and forth keening soft to himself, when he happened to hear the Voice again and the Voice said:

"You must see by now, Andy, it's just as I told you. You've no money now, have you? You have spent it all, buying stuff to weave her garments from. And she has worn the garments and has thrown them away; so there is nothing left. Nothing left except the joy of good work well done, and the feeling that God has really whispered in your ear. Now you'll have to go back down to Glastonbury and the work with-the-little-'w.' You'll have to stay there through the winter, Andy, and save your pay. But when the time comes again, I'll call you."

So Andy put a padlock on the old log cabin where his loom was set up and went back down to the mill-town. And being as he was a clever man, he was put back on his job right away. And the gray mists of winter packed down on the gray town and on the little gray people in the town. And Andy worked at his machine.

The next spring he got the call, just as the Voice had said he would. He drew his pay and, now that he knew a bit of what was required of him, he laid in a fair supply of what he should need. Then he was off into the hills. And one day there came the birds riding up on the winds like cavaliers with feathers dancing about; and when they began their keen bugling it pierced here and there and everywhere and made the walls of Winter to tumble down the same as Jericho's did. And sure enough, there a new babe teetered on her toes in the midst of the grass. Naked as a flower she was, and she smiled up at him.

So he wove for her with the lightest heart you can ever imagine. But, afterward, she went away in tears, the same as the other had done and as all Summers do; and Andy picked out a new pine tree and guessed she was keeping it green.

"Shall I be weaving *this* lass her shroud?" he had asked again. But again the Voice had made no answer.

So, naturally, the Summers came and came; and Andy wove and Worked and clad them. In time he became, as you may well believe, the finest hand-weaver (of Summer things, I mean) that was on earth in his day. He became so good at his hand-work that in winter, at the mill, he was actually clumsy at his machine! So it was just 'tother way round, as you see, from what it was when he started. He was so clumsy then with his hands that he thought everything had to be done by machine, you remember. But now he could outdo with his mortal hands anything that was ever done by machine.

And another queer thing happened to him; he got so he had a totally different idea of what work was. For his mates down in Glastonbury told him, "You work only during the winter, don't you?"

Whereas, he found himself answering: "Why, no. 'T is just the other way around. I can work only during the summer. I can't work at all during the winter. I'm dead all winter long — like all the Green Things." Then his comrades spoke wildy of him and touched their heads. They had learned the American idea, you see. Andy was crazy and he was lazy; and he did n't know when he had a good job; and there was no money in loafing. And all that sort of thing.

Now, I could keep you here all night telling you what all went on with Summer after Summer, and Summer after Summer, and Summer after Summer; until Andy grew old and wrinkled and ugly and very sweet in his mind and cleverer and defter and finer in his finger-weaving. But the main carry of it all is just as I've been telling you — So we have him coming along, year after year, loving his little lasses and his blues and greens and yellows and the way he could put 'em together and make Beauty.

That was the way he lived. And now this is the way he died.

Always, I think I told you, Andy asked the question: "And shall I be weaving this lass a shroud?"

And never had the Voice answered him.

Well, came one Summer that lived a long, long time and ran and tried to hide in far places when told she had to die; and to Andy it seemed he loved that Summer so fond and fair, more than any and all. Andy was sixty-eight then and for full forty years had done his winter stint and his Big 'W' Work in the hills. But he did not feel tired that year. No; he simply felt odd-like, as if it might be something unforeseen was going to happen to him and it would not tell its name to him first. (You know how you feel that way sometimes—as if wings were flying over your head and you think you see their shadows on the grass; but you look up and see no wings at all in the sky. Then you say: "Isn't the sky a queer color to-day?" and you feel uneasy.)

So it came about that while that Summer lingered and hid and ran, Andy again asked the old, old question he had always asked and to which he had never received an answer:

"Shall I be weaving *this* lass her shroud?"

And, lo and behold, the Voice, very soft and full of kindness, said: "If 't will please you, you might as well, Andy. Your Work is done. But—a question first. Have you ever once regretted the labor and the loss I have put upon you?"

Andy said to himself, "I am about to die." In a loud, clear tone though he answered: "Not once, O Voice! The joy I felt, the triumph I felt as I handed her a bit of master-work and she flung it to the idle winds was in itself enough. As I look back at it, there has been no labor and there has been no loss. I have heard God's whisper in my ears, and that will be sufficient for me until the end of eternity."

So the Voice said: "You know all there is to know. Weave the shroud."

Andy took steel-blue floss and at right angles he shot

it with white; and he made it so thin and fine that a million miles of it would not weigh a hundred pounds. And he said to himself, "I will weave a hundred pounds of it; and I'll wrap her in it myself, all softly, around and around, like as if she was a dead bride of the Green Folk's king, I will."

So Andy set to work, grim as Death himself. He bit his lip hard, and a queer shine came into his eyes; and he worked day and night, fast and faster, eating nothing and sleeping not at all — smoking away like a demon on his pipe and weaving miles and miles to his heart's desire.

"It shall be my master-bit," he told himself.

He never even looked out the window, so close was he on the heel of his work. "It shall be my master-bit," he kept saying to himself. The light got poorer and dimmer and there was a shorter lasting of it. Less light meant longer work; so it was thirty days and thirty nights before he got it anywhere near finished. No, it was n't fully done. How could it be? The Summer Fellows never finished anything complete, you know.

But 't was beautiful, just the same, all shimmering cold blue, and white like apple blossoms that have blanched and are ready to fall. And there was mile upon mile of it. It was wondrously fine, finer than anything Andy had done until then. It was really his master-bit, as he had said it would be. And he would have kept on and woven more, but —

He looked of a sudden out his window, one morning, in the gray, and he could not see that Summer anywhere!

He went to the door and shaded his eyes with his hands and peered over miles and miles of hills; and far down one gusset of valley he saw her dull-green robes a-trailing. He cried for joy. (You know — when you have lost a thing that you loved and found it again.)

Famished and weak he was, but he gathered the miles and pounds of that shroud in his arms and started down

the roads and over the hills after her, calling till his heart would break and his voice went dry:

"Wait for me, lass. I've woven your shroud! Wait for me, lass. I'm coming! I've your beautiful, downy shroud here —"

And he would stumble along, so weak the sweat broke out on him and he scarce could lift a leg. But with the shroud over his arm, he went on and on and on as best he could; his long, ragged gray hair a-flying and a wild glare in his eyes and those eyes fast fixed on the Summer as she slipped away.

'T was in this fashion he came to the summit of a foot-hill and could go no further. The cold had smitten to his bones, though the sweat still stood on his skin. He dropped down on the ground and slept a bit — but not sound asleep, and in his sleep he had awful dreams which made him wake.

He started up, crying weakly: "I have your shroud, lass. Wait for me!"

And then he noticed — *It was snowing!*

The soft white flakes he saw, dropping upon the earth like light years, my boy, years that themselves will be dropping and dropping forever and ever by tens of hundreds of thousands of millions and covering everything, all we do, all we are or were, far and wide with a white sameness — a big mound here where a Hero Worked, a flatness there where a zero worked — but all white, and all the same.

Andy put his hand to his forehead as if in a dream, and then — let me see; what did he do? — he wrung his hands and he cried out:

"Look yonder, look yonder! Oh, now I see why the Voice never answered me when I asked about the shroud! Now I see. I see my presumption, and I understand the silence — 't is God Himself who weaves the shroud for every Summer. Look yonder at the snowflakes a-coming down! I can see God's shuttle weaving in and out amongst them. In and out amongst the years of

snowflakes I can see God's hand, pushing the shuttle and weaving the shroud that will wrap the Summers and all and all — And I was so bold with my poor little shroud here, my master-bit of weaving — ”

And he broke down and began sobbing and threw himself face down upon the ground, wiping away at his tears with the wonderful weft he had made.

Then the great Voice came out of the wind and the darkening sky, sturdy as a great captain's, and shouted aloud through the thick of the flakes:

“Pray, but regret not, Andy. You did the Work of your Hand!”

So he died in the snow on the top of that hill, the contented artist of a perished dream, the master worker in a fabric that immediately dissolved. What he had told the Voice was true; the triumph he felt as he handed over to the Summer a bit of his best and she threw it away to the drifting winds like a bit of dying music — the joy he felt then was enough to last him till eternity ended. He had heard God's whisper in his ear; and he never would have heard it if he had stayed in the mill. He had done what God wanted him to do, a beautiful thing as beautifully as he knew how — and he felt at last that the beauty of it was somehow not lost at all.

III

Abruptly the old man left and went out into the snowy night. For there were tears in his eyes.

IV

The poker game was finished. Pigalle sauntered slowly over to my table.

“You know Handy?” he asked, slowly, in his broken English.

“Who's that?”

“The hole man that ees just go out. 'Is name ees

Handy Gor-don." He rolled his great expressive eyes. " 'E's cra-zee man. Also wot you call loafer: 'e do not work wen 'e wish not to. But, *mon Dieu*, 'ow 'e can play, that man!" He made a suave, swelling gesture with his hands and arms and heaved up his great bulk gracefully. "'Ow 'e can play! 'Ow 'e can *play*!"

"He is Andy Gordon!" I exclaimed. "What is he? A weaver?"

"*Comment?*"

"A weaver? Makes cloth — like this?" I held up the corner of the tablespread.

"*Corpo*, no!" ejaculated the astonished Pigalle. "Handy ees violinist-a."